

Philadelphia County Prison
(Moyamensing Prison)
1400 S. Tenth Street, at SW corner of
Passyunk Avenue and Reed Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1097

HABS
PA,
51-PHILA,
672-

PHOTOGRAPHS
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
PA
51-PA-1097
672

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY
PENNSYLVANIA	PHILADELPHIA	PHILADELPHIA
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME)		HABS NO.
PHILADELPHIA COUNTY PRISON		PA-1097
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE		
Moyamensing Prison		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)		
1400 S. Tenth St., at SW corner Passyunk Ave. and Reed St.		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE)	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
Cornerstone laid April 2, 1832; finished 1835	Thomas U. Walter (1804-1884)	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE)		
One of the first major designs of the great American architect, Thomas U. Walter, FAIA, and an early use of the Pennsylvania system of solitary confinement for prisoners developed in the Philadelphia area during the early 19th century. The entire complex and all separate buildings were demolished in 1968.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)		
Castellated style, derived from English Gothic architecture.		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS)		
Front buildings: Quincy granite ashlar with rubble rear wall Two cell blocks: rubble with granite ashlar trim		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE)		
Front buildings: approx. 173' (seventeen-bay front) X 36'; two and three stories Two cell blocks: each approx. 53' X 380'; three stories with clerestory skylights		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE		
The complex consisted of a main block, two flanking wings with extending walls, and two rear prison cell blocks and a separate rear central structure. A central two-story octagonal battlemented tower occupied the center section of the main block. Two smaller, battlemented octagonal towers occupied the front corners of the wings. (continued on page 2)		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)		
Each cell, as originally built: 9' X 13' dimensions; arched opening; oak plank flooring; wooden door with iron material on the interior side; water closet with hydrant; assorted flues.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
Original outbuildings of the main complex included kitchen, bake house, laundry and bath-house. Two smaller, separate prison buildings were built for the confinement of women and debtors. For the latter, see separate HABS documentation, Philadelphia County Prison, Debtors' Wing, HABS No. PA-1097-A.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.)		
See attached (page 2)		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION		DATE
Susan McCown, editor, Historic American Buildings Survey		May 2, 1984

EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (continued from page 1):

There were also two battlemented bastions on the front corners of the extensions. The complex was further accentuated with two projecting corner turrets on the main block. Battlemented parapets gave the finishing touches for the front section of the complex. The windows on the front elevation of the main block had lancet arches and hood molds. The main doorways and other openings elsewhere also had lancet arches.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION (from page 1):

Early Views:

Lithograph of front elevation of the prison, printed ca. 1839 by P.S. Duval, in possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. A photocopy of it is included in the field record folder for this complex.

Castner's Disasters, Criminal Prisons, shows two views: "View of Moyamensing Prison, Philadelphia County, Pa." and "Moyamensing Prison", a lithograph by J.T. Bowen. Publication date of this book not known.

For further information, and bibliography:

Primary and unpublished sources:

Written HABS architectural form for Philadelphia County Prison, 1966

Secondary and published sources:

The First Annual Report of the Inspectors of the Philadelphia County Prison Made to the Legislature, February, 1848. Harrisburg: J.M.G. Lescure, 1848

Scharf, J. Thomas and Westcott, Thompson. History of Philadelphia 1609-1884, pp. 1835-1837. Philadelphia: L.H. Everts and Co., 1884.

Sellin, Thorsten. Philadelphia County Prison Board of Inspectors Annual Report, 1939. Philadelphia: 1940.

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Teeters, Negley K. They Were in Prison. A History of the Pennsylvania Prison Society 1787-1937. Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1937.

Webster, Richard. Philadelphia Preserved. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976.

Westcott, Thompson. The Official Guide Book to Philadelphia, pp. 112-113. Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1875.

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